

## A Fulfilled Christian Life, Part 1 - Romans 12:1 – November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012

- Today's teaching will be part one of a series titled; "A Fulfilled Christian Life," and with it we'll embark on an amazing study of chapter 12.
- By way of introduction, I'll begin with a question, and it's one for which can set the tone, as it were, for what lies ahead in this new series.
- Here it is, have you ever wondered why it is, that some Christians seem to be fulfilled and joyful, while you are unfulfilled and miserable?

- To make matters worse, they don't have it any better than you, and may in fact be worse off than you yet they are more fulfilled than you.
- Then, if that weren't bad enough, they seemingly add insult to injury when they make an attempt to encourage you quoting scripture to you.
- If the truth be known, deep down in your heart you become resentful towards them, because you have in fact become envious of them.

- Enter the Apostle Paul, who, by the Holy Spirit, will rise from the pages of scripture to reveal how it is that we too can have what they have.
- Namely, how it is that I too can live a fulfilled Christian life and a joyful Christian life in spite of everything that may be falling apart in my life.
- This is the dirty little secret in the life of most Christians, in that, they don't want anyone to know inwardly but putting on a façade outwardly.

As one commentator on Romans twelve wrote, "How do we answer when someone asks, 'Ho have things been with you?' What do we say if we write a Christmas newsletter about the past year? Sometimes we may not be sure how to sum it up. ...We may have experienced dashed hopes in a relationship, discouragement at work, disappointment in our family, a worrying medical diagnosis, a deterioration in health, perhaps even the death of someone dear to us. ...For some, this music of God's grace is a song they have never yet heard."

- It's at this juncture in Romans chapter twelve that we can now hear perhaps for the first time for some this music of God's grace and mercy.
- However, that said, it's incumbent upon me to apprise you that this road to a fulfilled and joyful Christian life is paved with the paradoxical.
- By that I mean, the way up is the way down, if you will, which is why it can be so hard for us a believers, it goes against our human nature.

### 1. By laying my life down for Him (Verse 1)

- v1 Paul says therefore in light of God's mercy to offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God as our spiritual act of worship.
- Now first things first, the first word, in the first verse, brings up the first question, which is simply this, what is the word therefore, therefore?
- Please know that this is not a play on words, rather, whenever you come across the word, "therefore," it's because it's therefore a reason.

- The reason being is that it becomes a nexus, of sorts, in how everything that Paul wrote prior has led up to the conclusion of the matter.
- More specifically, in light of all the mercies of God here-to-fore, therefore, this is how we are in turn moved to respond of our own volition.
- Please don't miss this because it can be the difference between a Christian living their life being joyful, or living their life being miserable.

- Let me explain, if I trying to live my Christian life in my relationship with Jesus Christ out of duty, it will become for me drudgery and misery.
- Conversely, if I'm trying to live my Christian life in my relationship with Jesus Christ in light of and in response to His mercy, it's joyfully.
- This will be evidenced in how my Christian life will become a "get-to," as opposed to a "got-to," or maybe better said, out of desire or duty.

- Also, notice how that Paul says, "I urge you." Some of your translations will render this as I beseech you brothers in view of God's mercy.
- In a sense, Paul is sort of begging the reader to, in light of, and in response to, the mercy of God, offer ones body as a living sacrifice.
- In other words, in response to the mercy of God in what Jesus has done for us, we in turn lay our lives down for Him, of our own volition.

- I would suggest that it's only those Christians who have truly laid their lives down in this way that ever taste from the cup of a fulfilled life.
- Again, it's that paradox of dying to self that becomes the catalyst to our living for Christ. Simply put, living for self is a miserable way to live.
- Actually we find this paradox replete throughout the pages of Holy Writ not the least of which is from Jesus Himself found in the Gospels.

Matthew 10:39 NIV Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 16:24-25 NIV Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (25) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

It was Jim Elliot in his journal entry for October 28th, 1949, who in a sense echoed the words of the Savior when he wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Ironically, it would be at the hand of the very Waodani Indians in Ecuador, whom he was reaching with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that he would meet martyrdom some seven years later in 1956, after putting to pen these powerful words.

- In a way, this explains why Paul says what he says about offering our bodies as living sacrifices. The key word here is that it is living.
- This indicates that it is a continual sacrifice as opposed to a dead sacrifice that's done only once, such that we lay our lives down daily.
- This is how we live for the Lord, in that our lives become a daily walk with Him, in response to the mercy that we've received from Him.

Charles Spurgeon - "As the pious Jew presented a bullock or a lamb upon the altar, so consecrate ye your whole selves unto the Lord, to live and to die for Him. This is His due, and ought to be rendered to Him."

- This brings us to what the Apostle Paul says next in verse one concerning our spiritual act of worship being both holy and pleasing to God.
- Bear with me for just a bit as I try to unravel the bigness of this truth by explaining how it is that this works, as it will be germane to the rest.
- Here's what I'm thinking, when we present our bodies as living sacrifices, we in effect are worshipping God Who in turn makes us holy.

- To be holy is to be whole, not half, or two thirds, but whole, complete, fulfilled if you prefer, and if you think about it, it's very reasonable.
- By that I mean, it's only reasonable that we'd lay our lives down to Him, by virtue of how we laid our lives down to other things before Him.
- What motivates me to lay my life down is the mercy from God, which will propel me and prompt me to do that which is pleasing to God.

- In closing, let me try to give you the what, why, when, and how of verse one in order to set the stage for verse two, Lord willing, next week.
- The what is the laying down of my life the why is because of His mercy, the when is daily, and the how is it's our reasonable act of worship.
- That my friends is how it is that you and I can live a fulfilled Christian life in this world, in spite of all the adversity that strikes in our world.